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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Regional Conference on the Implementation of National, Regional and World Plans of Action for the Integration of Women in Development

Nouakchott, Mauritania
27 September - 2 October 1977

AIDE-MEMOIRE

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3 June 1977

REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND WORLD PLANS OF ACTION FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

Aide-mémoire

I. Background and purpose

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa is organizing a Regional Conference in Nouakchott (Mauritania) from Tuesday, 27 September to Sunday, 2 October 1977. The main purpose of the Conference is to review the progress made by member States, as well as by inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in Africa, in the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action which was officially adopted as part of the World Plan of Action at the World Conference of the International Women's Year, in Mexico in 1975.

2. The Regional Conference is in line with General Assembly Resolution 3520 (XXX) which stresses the importance of regular reviews and appraisals of progress made at the national and local levels in achieving the goals and objectives of the World Plan of Action. Furthermore, the Conference is deemed necessary in view of the proclamation by the General Assembly of the period 1976 - 1985 as the "United Nations Decade for Women : Equality, Development and Peace, to be devoted to effective and sustained national, regional and international action to implement the World Plan of Action and related resolutions".

3. The declaration of 1975 as The International Women's Year was well received by African Governments, and the majority of countries undertook special projects and programmes in observance of the Year. Many Heads of State and Government in Africa made proclamations on practical actions to be undertaken at the national and local levels. In a number of countries, either a new government ministry, commission or council for the integration of women in development was established or the existing machinery was strengthened. The Pan-African Women's Organization, member States and national women's organizations held seminars at regional, national and local levels, in order to identify the real problems of African women and to determine how best to solve them. In some countries, policies for the promotion of women employed in the private and public sectors were established and are currently being implemented. Reviews of legislation were urged by women's groups, and these are also currently being undertaken in a number of countries to eliminate laws which discriminate against women and to enforce those which recognize their special needs. Research and action programmes were directed towards upgrading the economic and social tasks of women in rural areas. Information

and publicity programmes were arranged through radio, television, press, pamphlets, films, posters, flags and commemorative stamps.

4. At the regional level, ECA established a Training and Research Centre for Women, as successor to the Commission's former Women's Programme, to assist member States more vigorously in their efforts to integrate women in development. These were but the beginnings, however, of the more extensive action required to achieve the goals of the Year : equality, development and peace. The main obstacles to the attainment of these goals - poverty, illiteracy, disease, ignorance and rapid population growth - which make it difficult to provide services for all, must now be tackled with renewed vigour during the Decade.

II. Specific objectives

5. The specific objectives of the Conference are :

(a) To review progress in the implementation of Plans of Action for the integration of women in development at the national and regional levels, including the effectiveness of various forms of national machinery established in member countries for this purpose, and to propose further activities;

(b) To examine the linkages between the Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development in Africa and the Role of Women in the ECA's Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa, 1976 - 1981 - 1986;

(c) To examine possible avenues for stronger co-operation and co-ordination of activities among organizations and agencies working at the regional level, with the view to supporting the implementation of the Plans of Action and suggesting machanisms for achieving such co-operation and co-ordination;

(d) To examine various alternatives and to recommend appropriate machinery, at the regional level, to promote and guide ECA/ATRCW's activities and programmes related to women's integration in development.

III. Sponsorship

6. The Conference is sponsored by ECA in collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (UNCSDHA) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Government of Belgium.

IV. Participants

7. Each ECA member State will be invited to nominate one senior Expert from the ministry responsible for national development planning, or from the national commission on women and development (where established), or from the ministry directly concerned with the integration of women in development. Although only this nominee will be invited to participate in the Conference at ECA expense, member States are encouraged to send other representatives at their own expense. The dead-line for receipt of all nominations will be 1 August 1977.

V. Observers

8. Representatives of the following organizations will be invited to participate in the Conference as observers, at their own expense :

(a) United Nations and other inter-governmental agencies interested in the subject-matter of the Conference;

(b) Pan-African Women's Organization;

(c) Organizations and governments currently providing support to ECA's Training and Research Centre for Women; and

(d) Organizations active in the region in programmes related to women and development.

VI. Languages

9. The official working languages of the Conference will be English and French.

VII. Agenda

10. The provisional agenda for the Conference is as follows :

Item 1. Review of progress in the implementation of Plans of Action for the integration of women in development at the national and regional levels.

- Working documents :

W.D.1. Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development in Africa : drawn up by representatives of African Governments at the Regional Seminar on the Integration of Women in Development, with Special Reference to Population Factors, held in Addis Ababa in

June 1974, and subsequently adopted by the World Conference in Mexico City and endorsed by the General Assembly at its 30th session in 1975.

W.D.2. National Machinery for the Integration of Women in Development in African Countries : a compilation of information concerning or contributed by member States of ECA (a progress report).

- Background documents :

B.D.1. National Commissions on Women and Development and Women's Bureaux : A pamphlet emphasizing the need to establish governmental machinery to ensure the full participation of women in all sectors of economic and social development, and suggesting the possible location, functions, composition, of such machinery at the national level.

B.D.2. Declaration of Mexico : Plans of Action : the official United Nations document containing the World Plan of Action and the regional plans for Africa and for Asia and the Pacific, as well as the Declaration of Mexico, as endorsed by the General Assembly.

B.D.3. ECA Conference of Ministers resolution 269 (XII), adopted in Nairobi in February 1975.

B.D.4. General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV), 3519 (XXX), 3520 (XXX), 3521 (XXX), 3522 (XXX), 3523 (XXX), 3524 (XXX), 3505 (XXX), 31/175, 31/133, 31/134, 31/136, 31/137, relating to the Decade for Women and the Programme for the Decade.

B.D.5. African Women Vol.3, No.1 (Women's Decade edition). African Women is a newsletter published three times a year to provide a forum for exchanges of views and ideas among African women, in addition to providing information on national, regional and local activities to promote the social, economic cultural, and political advancement of women in the region.

Item 2. Future priorities and action for increasing women's participation in Africa's development, and strategies to achieve the New International Economic Order and ECA's Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa, 1976 - 1981 - 1986.

- Working documents :

W.D.2. National Machinery for the Integration of Women in Development in African Countries (prospective view).

W.D.3. The New International Economic Order : What Roles for Women ? A brief summary of the major global and African issues of the NIEO, and the actual and potential roles of women of Africa in its implementation.

- Background documents :

B.D.6. Revised framework of principles for the implementation of the new international economic order in Africa, 1976 - 1981 - 1986 (E/CN.14/ECO/90 Rev.3) : a document spelling out the strategy for ensuring economic development in the member States of ECA.

B.D.7. African Women's Development Task Force : African Women's Development Task Force : an information pamphlet describing the volunteer Task Force, through which African women can help each other to achieve development. The Task Force is being organized by the ECA Training and Research Centre for Women.

B.D.8. Women of Africa - Today and Tomorrow : a booklet illustrating the role of women in both traditional and modern societies in Africa, and women's contributions to development. It also emphasizes the crucial needs of rural women and the obstacles to their advancement, suggesting methods for the solution of development problems pertaining to women; and, specifically, measures for raising family levels of living.

Item 3. Establishment of regional machinery to enhance the role of women in the economic and social development of Africa, and to promote and guide ECA's Training and Research Centre for Women.

- Working document :

W.D.4. Possible Regional Machinery to Promote Co-operation and Co-ordination in Africa - suggestions for various types of framework for co-operation and co-ordination among governments, voluntary agencies, regional organizations, and the ECA/TRCW.

- Background documents :

B.D.9 A Path to Progress for African Women : a pamphlet which summarizes the objectives and work of the ECA Training and Research Centre for Women.

B.D.10. The Origin and Growth of the ECA/TRCW : a supplementary document containing a brief history of the Centre, and an assessment of its work, against the background of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the ECA Conference of Ministers.

Item 4. National and Regional action related to the International Year of the Child.

- Working document :

W.D.5. The International Year of the Child : UNICEF Strategies and Activities in Africa, Including the role expected of ATRCW.

- Background documents :

B.D.11. General Assembly Resolution 31/169 designating 1979 the International Year of the Child.

B.D.12. Declaration of Mexico : Plans of Action.

VIII. Notes on agenda items

Item 1

11. This will involve both general considerations and a review of the implementation of the World and Regional Plans of Action adopted in Mexico 1/ and related resolutions, in particular General Assembly Resolution 3520 (XXX) which called for examination of :

> "The establishment of short-term, medium-term and long-term targets ... and priorities ... taking into account ... the minimum objectives recommended for achievement by 1980;
>
> "The adoption of national strategies, plans and programmes for the implementation of the recommendations within the framework of overall development plans, policies and programmes".

1/ Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year : United Nations publication (Sales No. E.76.IV1, Chapter II, Section A, paragraph 46).

12. In addition, the Conference will consider structures and activities of existing national machinery for increasing the access of women to the means and rewards of development in Africa. Participants from countries where such national machinery exists or is being established will be invited to comment on their machinery - its advantages and disadvantages, and their experience so far.

Item 2

13. In the light of the review of progress achieved and difficulties identified under Agenda Item 1, and the trends emerging in regard to women's integration in development, the Conference will examine the implications for the future. Relations between the Plans of Action and the search for a new international economic order will be considered together with the role women may play in this process, against the background of Africa's strategies for the NIEO. The participants may propose appropriate action which could be taken by Governments, ECA, OAU and women's and other organizations operating in the region, in order to ensure the fullest possible participation of women in the New International Economic Order.

Item 3

14. The establishment of regional machinery to enhance the role of women has been recommended by various United Nations bodies and organizations, and was agreed upon by the ECA Conference of Ministers in 1975. Under this item a representative of the secretariat will explain the origins, establishment and planned work programme of the Training and Research Centre for Women, the contribution it can make to the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action and the sources of the Centre's support. A discussion will follow on the effectiveness of these programmes in terms of the real needs of women in Africa. The implications of the General Assembly's resolution calling for the establishment at Headquarters, New York, of a secretariat, within the regular budget of the United Nations, to deal with women and development will be examined, as will the vital roles of ECA in representing this secretariat in Africa and in dealing directly with member States of the Region.

15. The desirability of establishing, at regional level, a machinery to guide and assist ECA and its member States in activities directed towards the enhancement of women's roles in development and in the co-ordination of national and regional programmes will be discussed. In conclusion the Conference may propose the structure, composition, functions, rules of procedure and resources of such machinery.

16. The participants will consider possibilities for co-operation between the Centre, OAU, the Pan-African Women's Organization and other organizations in the region, in line with resolution I of the World Conference of the International Women's Year and the World Plan of Action. The latter provides that :

"The regional economic commissions should provide assistance to governmental and non-governmental organizations to identify needed action, development policies, strategies and programmes for strengthening women's role in national development, and formulate requests for technical and financial assistance for such programmes.

"The regional commissions should also promote technical co-operation between the countries of the region, utilizing the existing talent available". 1/

Item 4

17. The contribution which national and regional agencies concerned with women and development can make to promoting the well-being of children in Africa during the International Year of the Child will be discussed. Proposals for action may be made by the Conference participants.

IX. Country papers

18. The representative of each country is invited to prepare a brief background paper on the situation in his or her country in respect of the topics on the proposed agenda. Observers are also invited to prepare brief information notes on their activities relevant to the implementation of the Plans of Action. One hundred copies of these papers, in English and/or French, should be brought to the Conference for distribution to participants.

X. Financial and other arrangements

19. ECA will meet the following expenses for one participant nominated by each member State to attend the Conference :

(a) Return air travel (by economy class) by the most direct route from home country to the venue of the Conference; and

(b) A daily subsistence allowance to cover expenses for room, board and some incidental expenses, at the rates officially established by the United Nations, for the duration of the Conference.

20. ECA will not assume responsibility for :

(a) Travel or other costs incurred by dependents accompanying the participants;

1/ See United Nations, World Conference of the International Women's Year, Declaration of Mexico, Plans of Action, paragraph 209, page 52, 1975.

(b) Salaries and related allowances for the participants during the period of the Conference;

(c) Costs incurred by participants with respect to travel insurance, medical bills or hospitalization fees in connection with their attending the Conference;or

(d) Compensation in the event of death or disability of participants in connection with their attending the Conference;or

(e) Loss of or damage to the personal property of participants during attendance at the Conference or during travel to and from the Conference.

XI. Documentation

21. The Working Documents (WD), noted under each Agenda Item will be distributed to the nominated experts before the Conference. The Background Documents (BD) noted in the Agenda Items will be circulated to participants at the Conference.

XII. Correspondence

22. All correspondence should be addressed to :

Director
Social Development Division
Economic Commission for Africa
P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa
ETHIOPIA

XIII. Further Information

23. Details concerning accommodation of participants; arrival and departure arrangements; passports, visas, international vaccination certificates; climatic conditions in Nouakchott; Government's Conference Liaison Officer; etc., will be communicated direct to participants.